

Message Text

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EXDIS

FOR S/S AND NEA ONLY FROM MACK AND HOUGHTON

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR PINS LE

SUBJECT: HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE IN CHRISTIAN PART OF LEBANON

1. THE DISCREET SOUNDINGS WHICH WE HAVE MADE INDICATE THAT THERE IS NO SERIOUS NEED IN CHRISTIAN-CONTROLLED LEBANON FOR ANY INCIREASE OR REDIRECTION OF THE HUMANITARIAN EFFORTS PRESENTLY BEING FUNELED THROUGH THE ICRC. FURTHERMORE, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT AN INCREASE IN USG HUMANI-TARIAN AID COULD BE POLITICALLY COUNTERPRODUCTIVE.

2. NONE OF THE LEBANESE LEADERS WITH WHOM WE SPOKE MENTIONED HUMANITARIAN NEEDS. IN FACT, CONVERSATIONS CONSISTENTLY ELICITED EXPRESSIONS OF PRIDE AT THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE CHRISTIAN-HELD AREA WAS PROVING TO BE EITHER SELF-SUFFICIENT IN THE REQUIREMENTS OF DAILY LIFE OR HAD DEVELOPED NEW CHANNEL FOR THIS IMPORTATION.

3. THIS GENERAL IMPRESSION WAS CONFIRMED BY ICRC OFFICIALS IN JOUNIEH WHO PLAN TO PHASE OUT PRESENTLY MODEST LEVELS OF COMMODITY IMPORTS IN A FEW MONTHS. TO DATE, THE ICRC HAS IMPORTED THROUGH THE PORT OF JOUNIEH SOME 454 METRIC TONS OF SUPPLIES, OF WHICH 84 MT ARE MEDICAL SUPPLIES. POWDERED MILK, BLANKETS AND A FULL RANGE OF MEDICAL SUPPLIES ARE THE MAIN ITEMS. THE MOST SERIOUS BOTTLENECKS HAVE BEEN IN ANTIBIOTICS, BANDAGES
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 NICOSI 02505 260439Z

AND CONTAINERS FOR BLOOD, BUT NO BOTTLENECKS HAVE LASTED

FOR LONG. THE LEBANESE RED CROSS, ACCORDING TO THE ICRC, HAS ESTABLISHED AN EFFICIENT BLOOD BANK.

4. THE ICRC DISTRIBUTES THE BULK OF ITS MEDICAL CONTRIBUTIONS THROUGH A COMMITTEE REPRESENTING THE VARIOUS HOSPITALS. SUPPLIES ARE PRORATED TO EACH HOSPITAL ACCORDING TO ITS PROPORTION OF THE OVERALL NUMBER OF WAR CASUALTIES. ICRC REPS FEEL THAT THEIR MAIN CONTRIBUTION IS IN ORGANIZING THE COMMITTEE AND ENFORCING EQUIABLE DISTRIBUTION. THE ICRC ALSO DISTRIBUTES SUPPLIES TO FIRST AID STATIONS ON THE FRONT LINES THROUGH THE LEBANESE RED CROSS. THE LATTER ORGANIZATION HAS "BRAVE AND TOUGH" PERSONNEL BUT HAS "VIRTUALLY COLLAPSED" IN AREAS NORTH OF JOUNIEH. THIS CAUSES PARTICULAR DISTRIBUTIONS PROBLEMS ON THE CHRISTIAN SIDE OF THE TRIPOLI BATTLE LINES.

5. THE ICRC IS TRYING TO DETERMINE THE BEST CHANNELS FOR DISTRIBUTION OF FOODSTUFFS DURING THE FEW MONTHS WHICH REMAIN FOR THIS PROGRAM. THEY ARE PRESENTLY USING THE OFFICE OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND SOME SECTIONS OF THE LEBANESE RED CROSS. THE LEBANESE AUTHORITIES CLAIM THAT THERE ARE 320,000 REFUGEES IN THE CHRISTIAN-HELD AREA, A FIGURE WHICH THE ICRC IS UNABLE TO VERIFY.

6. THE ICRC IN JOUNIEH IS IN RADIO CONTACT WITH GENEVA AND A MIDDLE EAST NETWORK WHICH INCLUDES BEIRUT AND TRIPOLI. THEY SEE THEIR MAIN MISSION AS PROTECTION OF WAR PRISONERS ("UNFORTUNATELY, FEW ARE TAKEN BY EITHER SIDE"). AND RESCUE OPERATIONS SUCH AS THOSE AT TEL ZAATER. THEY ARE FRANK TO SAY THAT THEIR HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO REFUGEES IS USEFUL AS A LEVER TO ALLOW THEM TO PLAY WHAT THEY SEE AS THEIR PRIMARY ROLES.

7. WE GINGERLY BROACHED THE QUESTION OF HUMANITARIAN AID WITH MICHEL KHOURY, A FRIENDLY AND ACUTE POLITICAL OBSERVER. HE ADVISED THAT WE NOT RAISE IT WITH OTHER LEBANESE LEADERS FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS: A) THERE IS NO REAL NEED; B) WHATEVER WE OFFERED WOULD BE CRITICIZED AS INADEQUATE AND TOO LATE; C) THE CHRISTIAN LEADERS MIGHT FEEL THAT WE WERE TYRING TO SATISFY POLITICAL NEEDS WITH A CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 NICOSI 02505 260439Z

HUMANITARIAN SOP.

8. ON THE BASIS OF OUR SOUNDINGS TO DATE AND THE FACT THAT NO CHRISTIAN LEADER MENTIONED A NEED, WE CONCLUDE THAT THIS IS NOT THE TIME FOR A HUMANITARIAN INITIATIVE. UNLESS INSTRUCTED FURTHER, WE WILL NOT PURSUE THE ISSUE. DILLERY

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